

## Consumer Confidence Reports

### 1. I got a Consumer Confidence Report/Water Quality Report from my water system. Is something wrong?

No. The Safe Drinking Water Act was updated in 1996. A new requirement is that public water systems serving more than 25 people year round must do an annual report telling customers about the quality of their drinking water.

### 2. What is a Consumer Confidence Report? Is everyone getting one?

This report contains information about the quality of your drinking water and any risks associated with consuming it. The first annual report is due in 1999 and will go only to customers of public water. You will not get a report if your drinking water comes from a residential well. If you live in an apartment or condominium and pay for water as part of your rent, you may not get a report. Ask your landlord to see their copy.

### 3. What is source water? Why is it important to include this information in a drinking water report?

Your drinking water must come from

somewhere in the environment such as a lake, river, reservoir or groundwater. This water is exposed to any contaminants that may be present in the environment. The water has to be made safe to drink, which is the job of your public water system.

### 4. My report shows two different levels for contaminants, an MCLG and an MCL. Why two levels?

Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) represents the ideal level which modern technology cannot always achieve. Many safeguards are built into the MCLG. The level of a contaminant that is achievable and that the water must meet, is the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) which is set as close as possible to the MCLG so there are adequate health safeguards and minimum health risks for cancer and other illnesses. For most of the MCLs, the health risk is based on drinking that same quality water for 70 years at two liters a day. Most people do not consume the same quality water for 70 years!

### 5. What do all of these numbers in the charts mean for my health?

A public water system is required to keep the level of over 80 contaminants

below the MCL. Both the water system and SC DHEC check your drinking water to make sure it is safe. Compare the numbers for your public water with the MCL number. Your water's test results should always be below the MCL. Most of the time this number will be so low that the reading will be listed as "not detectable" which means below the lowest level that can be tested.

### 6. Should I be concerned if I see a test result that is above zero or the MCLG level, BUT still below the MCL?

No. The water tested below the regulated MCL level and is safe to drink. The water comes from the environment and even natural substances in the environment can get into your water. The substances dissolved in water give the water its taste. Possible sources are listed for all detected contaminants. Public water systems do an excellent job of controlling the amount of these substances so that the water is safe to drink.

### 7. My water had a contaminant that was ABOVE the MCL last year. Should I be concerned?

While water systems work very hard to

prevent a contaminant level above the MCL, sometimes it happens. Violations are a rare occurrence in which you may be exposed to the elevated level for only a day or so. The health risk for most contaminants is based on exposure to this quality of water over a lifetime. Most of the levels shown in the Consumer Confidence Report represent the highest level tested for a contaminant during the entire year. If you are worried, consult someone familiar with your specific health problems such as your doctor.

**8. What about the warning for special health concerns such as age, organ transplants, cancer therapy or being HIV positive?**

If you have particular health concerns, discuss using public drinking water with your doctor. Some health problems require special considerations for food and drinking water as well as other lifestyle changes.

**9. How can I become more involved in protecting the quality of my drinking water?**

Another part of the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act update deals with protecting source water. Communities need to form

Source Water Protection committees to examine their drinking water sources and any potential contaminants that might affect the water quality. Your public water system sources will soon be inventoried to see if there is any potential for contamination. Citizens need to take an active role in their local Source Water Protection Program.

**10. Where can I get more information about my drinking water?**

Start with your public water system. Their phone number appears in your Consumer Confidence Report. SC DHEC (803-898-5300) and US EPA can also answer your questions. The Safe Drinking Water Hotline, 1-800-426-4791, is an excellent place to ask questions.

Look for your Consumer Confidence Report every year. Take a few minutes and read it over. Ask questions. Work with other citizens to protect drinking water sources. If we are to have the best quality drinking water, today and for the future, EVERY citizen must be informed and must play their part.

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## **Consumer Confidence Reports**

**BUREAU OF WATER**



South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control